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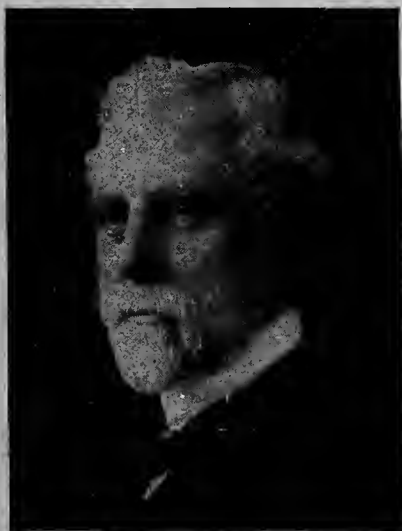
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The Extension Number



MARVIN DAVIS BISBEE
Director of Seminary Extension

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We call this issue the Extension Number. The picture on the cover is that of Director of the Library and of the Seminary Extension. We recommend that you read this bulletin through; it is more than the display of our wares; they are not in the front window, but in the background.

Professor Beckwith expressed the conviction the other day that when the history of this century is written it will prove itself the real Reformation Period. The things of the Kingdom are being extended. The horizon is dotted with clouds the size of a man's hand and some of them bigger.

The article by Secretary Atkinson is his impression of the Extending Kingdom from the vantage ground of wide travel and contact with the rank and file. President Davis, from opportunities equally varied and extensive, writes of the harvest field in our state universities. Professor Bisbee's estimate of the church "muing her mighty youth" against a mightier endeavor is the record of movements that have shaped themselves within his own observation.

Brother Mills, of the class of '77, has passed the threescore mark, but he is still "seein' things at night." His story of Benzonia, up near the Frankfort Assembly, is in fulfilment of the prophecy, "Your old men shall dream dreams." Avaunt to Oslerism and to the whole brood of biological fatalists, in face of facts like these.

Mr. Booth's article is a glimpse of the Seminary on wheels. Let the appreciation be our witness. Mr. Scully's contribution concerns our mail order department. Read the footnote to his article. He is one of the "rough riders of the Kingdom of God." The west is full of them, and they come in handy, too.

The last article explains itself. If it suggests a "first aid to the injured" kit, rather than a physician's case, be assured that it will not interfere with the regular practitioner; he is seldom found where these helps go. If you argue that such service threatens academic standards, the reply is that it raises the efficiency on the field.

crusaders, reformers, evangelists. It will need greater men still for the tremendous ages that are trembling to begin. The church of Christ will see to it that they are not wanting.

THE EXTENSION PROGRAM OF A VILLAGE CHURCH.

HARLOW S. MILLS, MINISTER, BENZONIA, MICHIGAN.

We are just beginning to realize that there is a Country Problem. It is not a new problem—it has existed for a long time; but it is pressing upon the attention of thoughtful people in these latter days, as never before. The city with its perils and possibilities has seemed to furnish the great problem; but we are coming to see that the problem of the country is scarcely less important and difficult.

This will be seen when we consider its extent. More than half the people in the United States live in the country and in the small villages. Agriculture is by far the largest single interest that our country has and more people are engaged in farming than in any other single occupation. And the farmer is coming to his own. He will occupy a place of greater influence in the future than he has in the past, socially, financially, politically, religiously and in every other way. With the telephone, better roads, free delivery of mail, improved methods of farming and the wide dissemination of knowledge, there has come a revolution in rural conditions that brings the farmer to the front, and he is a factor that must henceforth be reckoned with. The country is the source from whence the city is recruited and it is vastly important that the sources of the city's life be strong and pure and healthy.

And it is a serious problem and growing more so. Fifty years ago most of the people living in the country went to church. Long processions of teams drove in from the country on the Sabbath and the village church and the long lines of horsesheds behind the church were full. Now the sheds are empty and falling to decay and many of the churches are in a similar condition. The rural districts around many of our small towns and villages are a moral and a spiritual waste. Sunday is a day of sports and visiting and

often the usual work goes on. Foreigners are displacing the native born and unless something is done to check the downward tendency, the outlook is not encouraging.

This country problem must be solved by the village church. It is a problem for the village pastor more than for anyone else. If ever the country is thoroughly evangelized—if ever the moral and spiritual condition of the rural regions is what it ought to be, it must be brought about very largely through the efforts of the village church under the leadership of the village pastor. It is their particular problem and for its solution they are especially responsible.

A considerable portion of the students in the theological seminary will find their work in the small towns and villages. The seminary ought to give them some training for this work. It ought to help them to get the vision. They should be made to realize that there is a country problem and they ought to see its importance and seriousness. The students should have this vision before they leave the seminary and not wait years before it dawns upon them and perhaps live half their lives before they see half their work. It is a sad fact that many ministers never get the vision. They busy themselves in their village work and never see the larger work that needs to be done and can be done in the surrounding country. The region all about the church becomes a moral desolation and after awhile the village follows suit, for the only village church that continues to be strong and vigorous through a long term of years, is the one that is buttressed about by a strong and vigorous country work.

It is a good omen that in an increasing degree the attention of the people is being called to this matter through the public prints and by public addresses and that a campaign is being organized for the reclamation and proper culture of the country districts. Should there not be special courses in our seminaries for the training of young men for this special work?

Perhaps a brief account of an experiment that is being worked out along these lines may not be amiss.

A church in a small village of about seven hundred people celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its organization by striking out on new lines of work. It was composed of sturdy people, willing

to co-operate in any sane plan for the promotion of the Kingdom of God. The pastor, after many years of fairly successful work in the village and near-by country, conceived the idea of annexing to the parish all the surrounding territory for four or five miles in every direction from the church. He visited all the families outside the two villages in that territory and began to hold week-night meetings in the different schoolhouses round about and in private homes. There was at first no definite plan, except to serve the people in all possible ways. But the vision grew in extent and definiteness as the church and pastor were obedient to it and now, after a year and a half, the following results may be noted:

A parish eight or ten miles square, containing more than four hundred families and not far from two thousand souls. An assistant pastor has been secured and regular services are held on the Sabbath in nine different places—in one church, three chapels, three schoolhouses and in two private homes. There are six Sunday Schools maintained in the parish with an attendance of more than four hundred. There is a good response of the people in these various districts and the two pastors address not far from five hundred people on the average in their Sabbath congregations.

The assistant pastor, a young unmarried man, has organized athletic clubs among the young men and boys in the different districts where services are held and combined them in an Athletic League for the whole parish. They have occasional "meets" on the campus of the central village and they spend the day in sports and games and contests and in this way he is getting a strong hold on that portion of the community.

It is in the plan of the pastor to organize "Neighborhood Clubs" in the various districts that shall be social centers and training places for team work among the people for the promotion of their common interests. He proposes to arrange a system of lectures or talks by experts on subjects of practical interest, such as improved methods of farming and fruit culture, talks by a physician on sanitation and health, by a lawyer on legal matters, by an educator on school interests, accounts of travel, etc. With these talks and lectures he hopes to go to these various places about once a month on week nights and thus prove to the people that the church

is interested, not only in their spiritual welfare, but also in all things that come into their life. There will be a Central Neighborhood Club in the village and once or twice a year, in the Spring and in the Fall, it will act as host to all the surrounding clubs, a day being spent in social intercourse, with a basket dinner, and a program of speeches and music and usually a distinguished speaker from abroad as a special guest. Thus it is proposed to unify the work in this wide parish and thus to work together for the promotion of the Kingdom of God throughout all its borders.

This is in brief the scheme that the church and its pastor are attempting to work. It has not yet passed beyond the experimental stage, but it is working out with fair success and it would seem to be a practicable plan for village and country work in many places. At least we hope it may be some small contribution to the solution of the country problem.

The pastor each week edits a column in the local paper, putting into it items of interest about the work. This affords a medium of communication and keeps the whole matter before the attention of all the people into whose homes the paper comes.

THE NEBRASKA MINISTERIAL RETREAT.

EDWIN BOOTH, JR., MINISTER, NORFOLK, NEBRASKA.

The Nebraska Congregational Conference, recently in session, gave its hearty approval to, and took steps to perpetuate, the Nebraska Ministerial Retreat. It may be of value to the readers of the REGISTER to know something of this institution, particularly as it is so closely identified with the Extension Department of the Seminary.

The movement for such a gathering dates from the Devotional Hour of the 1910 Conference assembled at my Norfolk church. President Davis conducted that hour each day, giving a series of expositions. These were received with unusual pleasure and the ministers were frequently heard to express a wish that some way could be provided whereby, undisturbed by Conference business, such study together, under such leadership, might be secured.



